

THE MORAL OF A MIRACLE

NO. 1444

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God.”
Mark 11:22.

THIS exhortation stands in connection with the miracle of the withering of the fig tree that was clad with leaves but bore no fruit. The peculiarity of the parable calls for a few words of explanation before we proceed to enforce the moral appended to it. To many readers it seems strange and inconsistent that as it was not the time for figs, our Lord should have expected to find figs upon the tree at all. They wonder how it was that He should blame the fig tree for not having figs when the time of figs was not yet come. But it is because we do not live in the land of fig trees that we do not understand this, for according to the natural order of production the fig fruit precedes the foliage. The fig tree first of all puts forth its figs, at the end of the shoots—the little knobs beginning to form in the early spring, and the figs becoming very fairly developed before any leaves appear—so that if a fig tree has leaves upon it, it ought to have figs in a considerable state of ripeness. This fig tree, at a time when no figs were expected, and far less any leaves, seemed to have outstripped all its fellow fig trees, to have gone far ahead of them, to have been in advance of its own responsibilities as a fig tree, to have exceeded all the demands of the season and to have reached a state of supernatural fruit-bearing which no other fig tree had dreamed of reaching. There were leaves. The Savior went up, and finding the leaves which ought to have denoted figs in a considerable state of ripeness, He glanced around, but finding no single fig to justify the large pretense, He said, “Henceforth let no fruit grow on you forever.” You know that occasionally trees do leaf at abnormal times. There is a famous oak in the New Forest which usually has well-developed leaves upon it about Christmas, when winter reigns on every side, and “dead the vegetable kingdom lies.” There is a pretty superstition about it, as though the tree thrust forth its sudden honors at the birth of the great Lord. I have seen the tree and it seems very strange that it should take to leaf-bearing when there is not a leaf throughout the forest anywhere else. This fig tree, in like manner, for some reason or other, had got into leaf at a time when it ought not. If it did get into leaf it ought to have figs, but it had leaves and no figs. As such it becomes a fit and proper emblem of such a man as we sometimes meet with, who vaunts a righteousness he cannot verify, seems more conspicuously pious in his character than he could reasonably have been expected to be, makes a show of piety that is altogether premature, gives signs of maturity before the season, professes much though he yields nothing to corroborate it, a prodigy of self-conceit. He does not say he is absolutely perfect, but it needs very fine optics to distinguish the line. He outstrips all his fellows. His talk is something marvelous. His creed is more sound, his conscience more sensitive, his conduct more sanctimonious, and his standard in estimating others more censorious than the rest of the community. You wonder at it till you come near to him and then you find it is all talk, tinsel and trumpery, “Nothing but leaves,” no real virtue, but a leafy show of it. Yes, I have known decent morality outraged by such monstrous duplicity. All the leaves and foliage of a godly life, all the death and corruption of a graceless libertinism! Those around about him were ashamed to find themselves so inferior in their attainments, till presently the suddenness with which he withered astounded them more than the rapidity of his growth. There was nothing in it. The old proverb has it, “Great cry and little wool.” Great cry indeed, for holier voices are silenced by it and no wool at all to repay the shearer, “Nothing but leaves.” Now if any man is withered, it is such a man as that. One thing I have noticed in watching over a large church is that some, who have seemed too good to live, have turned out much too bad for us to want them to live very long. Such have been so pure, so white, so spotless, so stainless, so precise, so exact, so velvet-mouthed, so oily, so full of sugar, so hyper-holy in their hypocrisy, that it seemed cruel to feel inward qualms when you were near them. Yet under a thin

layer of this hollow pretension they have been so deficient in all spiritual life and reality and sincerity, that when we found them out, we could not help feeling a burning indignation in our own soul that men could go so far in lying unto the Holy Spirit. One does not wonder that Ananias and Sapphira fell dead, or that the fig tree was blasted that had so many leaves and no fruit. We have seen the same thing happen to men and we have not been amazed. We have only thought how righteously God has unmasked them, and exposed their hideous vices to the denunciation even of the world, which though it lies in the wicked one, has yet some sense of scorn at a religious lie.

Now, our Savior performed this miracle by way of parable, not that He cared for figs, or was angry because there were none, but that it furnished Him with an opportunity of instructing His disciples. This was an object lesson. We never learn so well as from something we can actually see with our eyes. Jesus did this that they might see and that their minds might be impressed with what they saw. The main impression upon the mind of Peter and the others seems to have been the extraordinary power of Christ. One morning their Lord said, "Henceforth let no fruit grow on you forever," and the next day when they passed that way they found the fig tree withered, even from the roots—not simply all its shoots gone, but according to Mark, in the 20th verse, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots, or totally destroyed. It stood a wreck of a tree, the precise opposite of what it had seemed to be some 24 hours before. They were struck with the power of Christ's word, at the simple decree of His mouth the doom had fallen on the tree. He had not touched the tree that we know of, He simply spoke, its bloom was past, and its doom had come. Now, our Lord did not go on to open up the parable to them, but perceiving the impression it made on their minds in one direction He aimed at still further engraving on their souls the moral which had been conveyed to their senses. So He went on to speak about the great power of God that they were wondering at, and to tell them that they could have that power, that they could wield it, and that they might exert it as He did. And He practically told them how they could get that power, and go forth girded with it.

I. Our first observation, in order to bring out this vein of thought, shall be that **IT IS GOOD FOR US TO OBSERVE THE POWER OF GOD.**

These disciples saw the power of Christ, which is the power of God, in the withering of a fig tree. We do not see miracles now. We do not look for signs and wonders to supply the credentials and the seal of faith. The works of God in nature are, if rightly understood, testimonies to the eternal power and Godhead, at once simple and sublime. Perhaps, under some aspects, they convey higher lessons than miracles. We ought, I think, to have our eyes constantly open to see the power of God in renewing the face of the earth. I like to observe it in the seasons. What a wonderful power was that which, all of a sudden, called up all sleeping bulbs and flowers from their graves and caused that which had been black soil to suddenly blossom into a golden garden, or to bloom into beds sparkling with many colors. Have you not seen lone places in the forests and nooks among the trees so glorious in color that it seemed as though the Lord had torn pieces of the robe of the sky and flung them down among the trees in the forest? We have seen the hyacinths all of a sudden in their deepest blue standing where all before, had been black mold or dried leaf. We see it every year, but it is a marvelous thing and we might stand and say, "How soon has the winter passed away! How speedily has earth put on her youth again!" Do you not see the power of God in all this? These creations and resurrections of spring—are they nothing? And now at this season of the year when the leaves are falling all around us, though the trees are not withering away, how rapidly they are undergoing their wonderful process of disrobing. You passed by a tree the other day which was green and you delighted to be beneath its foliage, and now in the setting sun of this afternoon it seemed as though it were blazing with golden fire, every leaf had turned yellow by the touch of autumn. How has God worked all this? Silently and quietly, without sound of trumpet, from year to year these miracles of nature proceed, of which I am speaking very roughly now. But he that looks into them, and studies them, shall be filled with amazement at the extraordinary power of God. This world has been going round the sun making its revolutions. Who could hold it to its pathway but the Most High? Each day it revolves and gives us the delightful vicissitude of day and night, it is the Lord that keeps the world on its axis. We do not think adequately at all of the mighty power of God which is continually going forth. The creation of blood out of water by the plague of Egypt astonishes us a great deal more than does the revolution of the world, and yet this is by far the more amazing thing of the two.

It does us good, beloved friends, to stand sometimes at night and look up to the starry heavens and think what a God He is that calls all of them by name, leads them out in marching order so that not one of them fails and sustains each one of those celestial orbs in its place throughout the ages. Marvelous are the works of God in nature. Can you read about Vesuvius beginning to pour forth its fires, or of earthquakes in different places shaking the mountains to their bases, and making the strongest works of men to rock and reel, without a sense of reverential awe? Can you be in a storm at sea, can you tremble while each timber starts as the waves beat upon the vessel, without feeling that this is a great God whom we serve? I invite you to think of the greatness, the majestic grandeur of God in nature, because the God of nature is the God of grace, and the God that rules on high, and thunders according to His pleasure, is the God whom we call Father, and who has taken us into His family that we may be His sons and daughters. Though we do not see fig trees withered away, yet often ought we to stand in holy wonder and say, "Great God, how wonderful are Your works!"

Now, if you turn your eye from nature to providence, which I invite you to do, you will observe stupendous examples of the great power of God. This withering of the fig tree has been repeated 10,000 times on a grand scale. I will only remind you of what has happened in our own day. A few years ago slavery seemed to have struck its roots into the soil of the Southern States in America. Its branches ran over the wall, the Northern States were bound to return a fugitive slave. How quickly has that fig tree withered away! Slavery has gone, blessed be God, forever. And there treads not now on American soil a man of any color who is a slave. Across yonder channel frowned the great empire of Napoleon. It looked as if it were very mighty. It spread itself like a green bay tree. It was the main support of the papacy, but how quickly has that fig tree withered away! Over yonder, in Italy, there were a number of petty principalities with paltry tyrants crushing down the people. God raised up an honest man, who came forward as the champion of the oppressed, and how speedily did those little fig leaves fall. There stood the man of sin with his temporal power, and he was master of his own domains and chiefly of the city of Rome, but how soon has that fig tree withered away. One after another revolutions have occurred, and events have transpired in our own day, which prove that the Lord is very great in power. All through history the ages bear record that whenever an institution has sprung up that has brought forth no good fruit just at the very time when it was full of leaves, when everybody said, "Now we may expect fruit from it," and when it was supposed to be impossible that it should pass away, just then has the Lord spoken and its hour of doom has come. One word from Him and how speedily has this fig tree withered away! All providence is full of it. He that reads history looking for providences needs not turn two pages over without finding instances. He shall see the hand of God here and there, and there and there again, permitting for a while the growth of evil, but then speedily sweeping it away. So shall every system which defies His laws, prove that its prosperity, is the precursor of its utter destruction. It flowers and flourishes but to droop and die, to die just in its prime. While we stand trembling and astonished at its spread, so thick its leaves, so tangible its vitality, at that very moment we hear the powerful voice of Christ and see the inevitable result in the withering away of that which was in the prime of vigor.

Now, as we have opportunity to watch the power of God, let us always be ready to observe it. Not, however, with vacant wonderment, nor with idle gossip to exclaim to one another, "How extraordinary!" Although the works of God are meet subjects for adoring wonder, yet when we remember who He is and what He is, there is a sense in which we may well cease to wonder or to be startled, as if our poor philosophy must forever reckon as strange phenomena the tokens of His presence, the proofs of His agency and the impress of His hand. You know the story of the good woman who, on being told of some answers to prayer which had been received, was asked, "Is it not wonderful?" and she simply replied, "No, not at all. It is just like Him. That is the way of Him." And so, when God puts away withered fig trees and when He shows His power in other ways in His divine providence, it is wonderful for us to contemplate and yet it is not amazing for Him to perform. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire and He bids us be still and know that He is God. He will be exalted in the earth. It has been the way of Him from the first and it will be the way of Him still.

We ought to watch these works of power that we may feel that this power is altogether engaged upon our side. If we are indeed on the side of God, if His grace has reconciled us to Him, if we live to promote His glory, if we are under His keeping and the guardian care of the Lord Jesus, then all the power

that makes an earthquake will be put forth to shake heaven and earth sooner than we shall perish. All the power that shows itself in providence shall be put forth to deliver us sooner than we shall famish. Our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. Our bread shall be given us and our water shall be sure. The mighty God, Jehovah is His name, has pledged His omnipotence for the advance and the victory of His people, and stand they shall and win the day.

That is my first point for our evening's meditation; it is good to observe the power of God.

II. God has called His people to **WORKS WHICH NEED ALL THAT POWER.** Our Lord Jesus Christ practically tells us this when He says, "Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you, that whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says." A Christian is a miracle. He is a mass of miracles. When he gets to heaven he will be a miracle of miracles. His story in the telling thereof will fill all heaven with enthusiasm, so marvelous is the work of God in the heirs of salvation. It is no small thing to be a soldier of the cross—a follower of the Lamb. Now, tonight, dear souls, if the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit should call any of you to come to Him, you would, perhaps, feel immediately the deepest anxiety in your heart. I think I hear you say, "If I come and trust Him, yet how shall I be saved, for see the difficulties that lie in my way? I see before me the vast mountain of my past sin. How can I come to Christ? Surely this alp of transgression must hide Him from me." Have faith in God, dear friend, and God's power will be put forth to move this mountain, yes, Christ has moved it by His precious death. "Yes," says the poor heart, "but I feel such a mountain of despair, I cannot hope. I think I have sinned beyond grace." Have faith in God and you shall see this mountain of doubt and despair all swept away and you shall joy in Him that blots out your sin like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. "Ah," says the soul, "but I seem so cold, so heavy, so dead. I do not feel as earnest and eager as I should. There is nothing in me that is good." Have faith in God's power to help you in this and you shall find your lethargy and languor give place to energy and vigor, and your cold heart shall be thawed in the rivers of repentance. "Oh," says one, "but I need everything. I am far off from God, as far as I can be. There are impassable barriers between me and God." Yes, but have faith in God. Do but believe in His fatherly love and grace, His goodness and faithfulness. Do but trust Christ and rely on the great Father's love in Jesus Christ and you shall find that the mountains which stop you will melt away and no longer impede you.

I know what has happened to you. Your fig tree has been withered down to the roots. How full of leaves it used to be! You were once a fine fellow. If you did not bring forth any fruit to God, yet what fair promises you did make—what grand resolutions! What a fine self-righteousness you had, but the power of God's will has already withered it down to the roots. Now, the same power of His gospel by the Spirit will take up all the mountains that stand between you and God and cast them into the depths of the sea, and you shall rejoice in Him.

God calls the coming sinner, then, to duties and obligations so far beyond his own natural capacity that it requires all the power of God to enable him to fulfill them. Even when bid to repent and believe and come to Christ, it needs the Godhead to help him do that, but the Godhead will enable him, and so he shall receive grace for obedience to the faith. Have faith in God, then, and faint not by reason of discouragements.

But after we have come to Christ we still find it no easy task to continue pressing on to God. You that have believed in Him and are saved, do you not often cry out, "O weak and erring mortal that I am! How shall I ever reach to perfection? How can I get rid of sin that haunts my imagination and vexes my heart? What heaven of bliss can I know unless my soul is purified from every stain?" Most true it is that there can be no such thing as perfect happiness until there is perfect holiness and yet by faith the believer looks for both. "But," do I hear you say, "first, my ignorance is in the way"? Have faith in God and you shall be taught of Him, and that mountain of darkness shall disappear. "Oh, but then there is my old corruption in the way and that comes in between me and every advance in grace." Have faith in God and you shall find He will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and fill you with virtue and vitality through believing. "Oh, but the trials and temptations of each day, how shall I stand against them?" You cannot stand against them alone. They are far too much for you, but have faith in God and then fierce as those temptations may be, you shall be able to resist, for His power is able to hold you up. Though a le-

gion of devils at once should tempt you, have faith in God and they shall be put to the rout. You shall have sufficient grace to bear you through.

“Yes, but,” says another, “you do not know my trials.” No, my dear friend, and you do not know mine, but both you and I may know this, that He who measured out the trial, for they are all measured and weighed to the last pennyweight, knows how to strengthen us so that we can bear them. We shall be able to say to the mountains of trial, “Depart,” as truly as we bade the fruitless fig tree, “Be dried up.” Rise, worm Jacob, and thresh the mountains and beat them small. Yes, turn them into chaff and winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away. Only trust in the eternal power and godhead and there is nothing between here and heaven that need give you any fear. If we are without God we shall stumble at a straw, but if God is with us, who can be against us? Even if our life should be protracted to an advanced old age, should our bones be full of pain, and our flesh infected with a thousand painful infirmities, even though we should spend years upon a weary bed, with poverty as well as pain to afflict us, he that has faith in God shall sing aloud upon his bed and praise the Lord because the power of God rests upon him. You are not called to be parade soldiers, to exhibit your regimentals and your fine feathers. You are called to fight. You must fight if you would reign. Do not mistake it, you are called to work miracles—moral miracles, spiritual miracles. You are called to do great wonders between here and heaven. You see your calling, brethren, and you will see, if you see aright, that nothing but a divine power can help you to accomplish it.

Now, if this is true in respect to our own spiritual life, I am sure it is so in trying to win the souls of others to Christ. The man who brings a soul to Christ achieves a result which no genius or skill of the creature could compass. The power which God puts upon a man to make him the means of turning a sinner from darkness to light has no parallel. If a man could tell me that he stopped Niagara at a word, I would not envy him his power if God will only allow me to stop a sinner in his mad career of sin. If a creature could put his finger on Vesuvius and quench its flame, I would not at all regret that I had no such power if I might but be the means of staying a blasphemer and teaching him to pray. This spiritual power is the greatest power imaginable and the most to be desired. If any of us aims to be useful, we cannot succeed unless we have this divine power, for without omnipotent spiritual help we can produce no spiritual results. You can read a sermon or preach a sermon, or hear your children read in your Sunday school class without any help from God, but then nothing will come of it. If there is to be living preaching and living teaching that really brings souls to Jesus Christ, the work must all be worked in the power of the Holy Spirit from first to last. You see your calling then, brethren. You must have that power which speaks to fig trees and they wither—yes, a power sufficient to speak to a mountain and pluck it up by its roots, for nothing short of this will fit you for your work.

Take the larger scale for a minute and think of it. We are all called to try and extend the Redeemer’s kingdom and as Christians we are greatly concerned for the progress of the church and the truth of God. I am sure in these evil days there is not one of us that can look upon the signs of the times without considerable sorrow. I hope it is not because I am growing older that I take a gloomier view of things than I did some years ago, it is not my eyes, but I actually see superstition much more rampant than it was. That particularly sweet fig tree of ritualism has spread its boughs amazingly. And then there is the very specious fig tree of skepticism that seems to overshadow a considerable portion of the professing church of Christ. Well, now, what is to be done? Nothing is to be done except as the text tells us—“Have faith in God.” And when we have faith in God we must speak with fidelity and with authority too. We must show our faith by the testimony we bear, and the Word of God that comes out of faithful lips shall roll like thunder and flash like lightning, and strike with electric force. And so the old effect it always had on these leafy fruitless fig trees will be repeated, it shall make them wither away. If you have ever read the history of skeptical thought in Germany—not that I recommend you to do so, for it is a sore labor and a weariness of spirit—but if you have ever waded through any of these histories of philosophy as I have myself, you will doubtless have observed a thought rising up like a cloud full of portents and covering the Fatherland with its fantastic shadows till the people are led to see everything in a new light, or under a fresh coloring. They give the poet, the essayist, and the critic of the new cloud region credit for inspiration, and all who abide under that shadow are written down as infallible. But how insecure the reign of human wisdom! In about twenty-five years you could buy all the books of that day at the price of waste

paper, for a new philosophy has sprung up, a fresh system which has rendered obsolete all that preceded it. The scholars are in ecstasy. They shout, "Eureka!" and sneer contemptuously at all who refrain from echoing their cry. Wait a little while and another meteor will attract their gaze, another ephemeral glowworm will glimmer in the darkness. I have read of a gourd "which came up in a night and perished in a night," but the cedars of Lebanon grow slowly and endure longer. "How soon has this fig tree withered away!" Thus have I thought and so have I said, as I have read one after another, the various systems of nonsense that they call philosophy and metaphysics. "How soon has this fig tree withered away!" Now, in the lives of even some of the younger folks here, you might have seen in England, different systems of unbelief coming up in different quarters, under which the thinkers of the age (as they call themselves), or the triflers of the hour (as we might better style them), have sought shelter. At one time we were all wrong because of some wonderful discovery of old bones. Geology had upset us. Then some other science was brought to the front. One has lived to see a number of little scares. The fig trees have come up with a vast show of foliage without any fruit. In looking back at them we can say, "How soon has this fig tree vanished away." And as to the present pretensions, whatever they may be, we have only to wait a little while, with confidence in God, and we shall see these fruitless fig trees also wither away. Yes, and if there are systems in the world which seem more enduring, colossal as the Alps, with foundations deep as hell, we have still but to exercise faith enough and cry to God loudly enough and fling ourselves upon omnipotence boldly enough, and then to speak, and in the speaking of the everlasting gospel we shall see these mountain systems plucked up by the roots and cast into the midst of the sea. There is the point; we must have divine strength to do it.

III. Now, our Savior shows us the **CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE DIVINE POWER AND OUR WORK.**

How are we to acquire this power? We believe that God can do all things; we have seen something of the greatness of His power. How can we be girded with it? Here is the answer, "Have faith in God." It is to be by faith, that is, trust, reliance, belief. It must be in God. Our faith must not be partly in God and partly in something else, but faith in God. And it is, literally, "*Have the faith of God*"—the faith which is worked in us by God, and sustained by God, for that is the only faith that is worth having.

Have the faith of God. "Oh, but this is a very small thing," says one. It is. It is a child's instinct to trust his father, but it is the rarest grace in the world to trust our Father who is in heaven. "When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?" If anybody could find it, He could. He knows where it is, for He is the author, the giver, and the nourisher of faith. Yet there is so little of it in culture that if He Himself searched for it, He would not find many fields in which it grows, or many hearts in which it thrives. Why, some of us have faith in Him whereby we are saved from this present evil world. How shocked at ourselves we have reason to be in respect to the little faith we have in Him for the furtherance of His own work, and how our heart sinks under our own daily trials! He has given us justifying faith, but our faith is still a faith, the weakness of which should make us humble ourselves before Him. Doubt God! How monstrous it sounds, how foolish it appears, how impossible it seems. To an experienced Christian, at first sight, it really seems incredible that any disciple of Jesus should doubt God. You, my dear brother, that have been fed and nourished all your life by singular providences—you whose life is so remarkable that if its incidents were all written, people would look on them as a romance, you who have seen His arm made bare on your behalf many times, you who have often been compelled to say, "Still has my life new wonders seen"—do you doubt Him? How can it be? Alas! Alas! Is not this the fault, the grievous, crying sin of many of the children of God? Hence our Lord puts it thus. He not only speaks of the faith of God, but He says, "Have it; have it. Have faith in God. Have it handy. Have it about you. Have it for daily use. Carry it with you." Some of you have got a good anchor somewhere, but you left it at home when the storm came. You have faith somewhere, but you do not seem to exercise it just at the time when faith is required. "Have faith in God." He does not tell you how much. There is no need to prescribe any limit. Have unlimited faith in God, have daily faith in God, have continual, perpetual, abounding faith in God. "Have faith in God." This is the connecting link between our weakness and the divine strength, by which we are made strong.

Have faith in God about every purpose and every peril that may arise. You saw how the fig tree withered away. Have faith about that. You have seen it. Now, have faith about mountains. Do not think

that God's power is limited to withering fig trees. Have faith about things of magnitude and things minute, but more particularly about the things that at this moment distress you. When you feel that you could believe God about everything but one particular matter that just now frets your mind and breaks your peace, you evidently misjudge your own capacity for faith. You ought to measure its strength by the influence it exerts upon you under your present trial. O, my sister, have faith in God about that sick little infant at home. Your heart is sad that the Lord's will in this, must be done, but He will strengthen you to bear it. Have faith, too, about those simple family matters which are causing you so much irritation. You have been praying about them, now commit your cause to God, and have faith that He will grant your request. "Oh, but there is a matter of deep moment harassing my very soul which I should not like to mention to anybody," you say. Have faith about it and mention it to your Lord. Do not go about and make mischief by talking of it, but have faith about it. "Yes, but I am out of employment," says a poor man over yonder. "And I am getting hardly pressed." Dear brother, are you a true believer? Have faith about that now. I know you will say to me that I do not know your trial. No, I do not. But you do not know some troubles I have had! And if you were to tell me to have faith in God about them, I would thank you for the exhortation, for that is the only way I have of getting over them. And dear brother, it is the only way you will find of being extricated from your dilemmas. What a mass of troubles are represented by this assembled multitude! If we could empty them out, what a heap they would be. And yet, if the living God is trusted, how the heap all vanishes! What does it matter? The burden is all gone when you have once left it to Him. May the Lord the Holy Spirit, help each one of us to have faith in God about the present difficulty, whether it is a fig tree or whether it is a mountain. I do not know what some of you do who have no God to trust. Some of you who are very poor and have to suffer a good deal in this life, and yet have no hope of the world to come. Ah, poor souls, the Lord have mercy upon you. Some of you seem to go through fire and water here, and yet you have no heaven in prospect, no hope in the world to come. Oh, see to it. May God grant you to have faith in Christ, so there shall be no mountain between you and God, but you shall be with Him where He is when your time comes to depart.

IV. Now, I conclude with my fourth point, which is THE CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE DIVINE POWER AND OURSELVES.

To use a very simple figure, you remember how Franklin, when he knew there was an electric fluid in the cloud, sped his kite and brought down the lightning? Well now, there is the everlasting power of God up yonder, and I must learn to let my faith get up into the clouds to bring down the divine power to me. If I have faith enough I can have any quantity of power. "According to your faith be it unto you." If you are weak it is because your faith is not a good conductor between you and the eternal strength. If you had better faith, is it possible to judge how strong you might be? There is no telling what a man might be able to accomplish if his faith were to increase with the occasion. In Samson we see what physical strength came to, in a man who had confidence in God, for that man Samson, though faulty in almost every point, had such confidence in God as hardly anybody ever had. There were a thousand Philistines and they shouted against him, but what did that matter to that great big child Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily on Him? He said, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." O glorious faith! And so ought we to feel, "I am nothing. I am nobody, yet God is with me, and on I go, dauntless and undismayed." If earth is all in arms abroad, it matters not if God is with us. When there is a minority of one, and that one is God, we are in the majority directly, for God is all, and all the people in the world are nothing before Him.

The Lord gives us some hints of how to use our faith. First, we must use it to expel every remaining doubt. "Whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says." God will not bless the speaking of that man who is full of doubts. Get rid of the doubts. The gospel of this present half of the 19th century is, "Doubt." It does not say, "And you shall be saved," because it sees no immediate need of being saved. The gospel preached in numbers of our places of worship is—"Doubt, doubt. Do not be as those nearly extinct Puritans that believe in the inspiration of the Bible and hold to old-fashioned, exploded doctrines. Be a man and doubt." They will doubt themselves into a pretty scrape before long. Some of them are doubting till their chapels are empty, they are scaring their people away from them, as naturally they would, for doubt is a ghastly apparition.

But, dear brethren, you and I have to do the very opposite of this. We have to find out every lingering doubt, and draw it out and drive it away. A doubt! When a man is about to strike a blow in faith it is a doubt which paralyses him. A doubt! Why even a little doubt is like a small stone in a traveler's shoe, it lames him. It is a very little thing, but he had better spend a week in picking it out than go on with it there. Believer, you must get doubt right out of you, for until you believe, you will never travel well to heaven, or be strong in the Lord. Only fancy Martin Luther agitated with doubts as he rode into Worms! Not quite sure about justification by faith when answering for his life! Agitated with doubts when he was carrying his life in his hands to confront the powers of the world in the name of God? Doubt would have ruined him. Let us chase the spirit of unbelief away. The Lord help us to do so and to be filled with faith.

The next hint the Savior gives us is to be much in prayer, because it is by prayer that faith exercises itself unto God. "What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." Much prayer, but of a believing sort, should be offered by simple, trustful disciples, for the cry of faith which is true prayer touches the heart of the great Father and He is prompt to grant His children their desires.

But one other hint. That is, we must see to it that we are purged of what would effectually prevent prayer being heard. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." Would you have the power of God to gird you, you must get rid of all malice from your heart. You must forgive your brother. All selfishness and uncharitableness must be eradicated from your breast or else the Lord cannot trust you with power. If you had despotic power linked with a pitiless disposition you would not only curse a leafless fig tree, but you would get to cursing anything and everything that was contrary to your own likes. If you were endued with all manner of power, it would be no mercy to you, but an infinite misery, unless you were also partakers of the mind of Christ. Unless you have His heart of infinite purity and inimitable benevolence, power would be a most dangerous thing to trust you with. The Lord will only trust His children with power in proportion as they know His will and strive to do it. When they become completely like Him, their very prayers which were sown in weakness shall be raised in power. But sin is awfully debilitating, it weakens, depletes and utterly prostrates a man. Any kind of sin, if it is tolerated in the will—if there is a hankering and a lusting after self—if we think that power when acquired may be used for our own pleasure, profit, or honor, the power will not come, it cannot possibly be conferred on such terms. You shall move no mountain from its place till first of all, the mountain of your selfishness is cast into the sea. O Lord, purge Your vessels and then fill them. Cleanse the instruments from rust and then use them. Here we are now before You. Blessed be Your name, You have saved us. Now make us fit to be serviceable in Your cause and kingdom, poor unworthy things as we are, and You shall have honor of us and by us forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—67E, 533.**

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